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Senate passes Van Woerkom's bill protecting foster children from sexual predators

LANSING—A measure that would protect foster children from sex offenders by requiring criminal background checks and other steps passed the Senate today, said bill sponsor Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores.

Senate Bill 1411 would require criminal history and criminal records checks of all current licensees, all individuals seeking a license, and those seeking a renewal license for a foster family or foster family group home.

"This is important legislation to protect children," Van Woerkom said. "The Student Safety Initiative, which went into effect this year, was written to guard against sexual offenders and predators in schools and daycare facilities. This bill puts in place the same protections for foster children."

The measure would also:

- Prevent licensure for those with sex crime convictions;
- Require that the Department of Human Services perform a criminal background check on all persons over the age of 18 residing in the foster family or foster family group home; and
- Require all licensees to report arraignments for any felony and certain misdemeanor crimes.

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